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PROGRAMME MATTERS REQUIRING POLICY GUIDANCE FROM THE COUNCIL

Report of the Executive Director

Addendum

Climate Change

Biological Diversity

Sustainable Agriculture

Summary

In the present, third addendum to UNEP/GC.16/21, the Executive Director reports on activities related to climate change, implemented since the second special session of the Governing Council. This report includes (a) the results of the Second World Climate Conference; (b) the activities of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; and (c) the process of preparation of a framework convention on climate change.

In relation to biological diversity, the Executive Director reports on the progress made in the preparation of an international legal instrument on biological diversity. Additionally, this report contains a summary of activities initiated for the implementation of Governing Council decision 15/24 on sustainable agriculture.

I. CLIMATE CHANGE

A. Second World Climate Conference

1. In its decision SS.II/3, section A, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director (a) to convene, jointly with the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), a preparatory meeting to prepare the draft of a ministerial declaration for the Second World Climate Conference; (b) to request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to plan to take into account the outputs of the Second World Climate Conference in the discussion of the climate issue by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session; and (c) to report to the Council on the potential implications to UNEP of the results of the Conference.

2. The Second World Climate Conference was convened in Geneva from 29 October to 7 November 1990. It reviewed the progress of the World Climate Programme (WCP) since its inception at the World Climate Conference in 1979, and recommended how the WCP should be structured and how it would operate in the last decade of the century. Several of the recommendations of the Second World Climate Conference are of relevance to UNEP, particularly in the further implementation of the World Climate Impact Studies Programme.

1. The implications of the Conference statement

3. Since the inception of the WCP, UNEP has been an active partner in the programme. One deficiency in this otherwise successful programme is the limited participation of Governments, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies other than the World Meteorological Organization, UNEP and the International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, and by non-governmental organizations other than the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU).

4. According to part III of the Conference statement, "Organizational and Policy Issues for International Activities", the WCP should be broadened and closely co-ordinated with related programmes of other agencies in response to increased emphasis on the prediction of climate and its impacts. In a broader WCP, the burden of assessing of the impacts of climate variability and change on socio-economic systems and on the environment will be shared with participating agencies and specialized non-governmental organizations and government departments. UNEP's role will be of a broad co-ordinating character for all programmes on climate impacts to be incorporated into the WCP and studies needed to formulate the proper response strategies.

5. The Executive Director notes the recommendations of the Conference that intensified efforts are required to refine further our ability to predict short-term climate variability, anticipate climate impacts, and identify rational strategies to mitigate or prevent adverse impacts, including those that climate change threatens to have.

6. The Second World Climate Conference calls for a specific initiative to create a network of regional, interdisciplinary research centres, located primarily in developing countries and focusing on all the natural science, engineering and social science disciplines required to support fully integrated studies of global climate change, its impacts and policy response.

7. In relation to the changing level of CO_2 and other greenhouse gases, it is important to pay attention to gaseous emissions from farmlands. The relationship between land use/land cover and greenhouse gases will have to be examined within the context of global warming. There is a need to analyze climate data in relation to land degradation and terrestrial ecosystems.

8. It is necessary to carry out a diagnostic study of climate variability within the framework of hydrological cycles and various climate regimes, in order to ensure comprehensive action regarding early-warning systems. Such efforts should be focused on how to develop adequate early-warning systems under various climatic conditions.

9. The Second World Climate Conference recognized that people need better information on the role of climate in development and on the additional risks posed by climate change. UNEP's programme of public information (books, films, audio-visual kits, roving seminars, etc.) will be strengthened and, as necessary, augmented by other traditional and innovative methods of public information, education and training. UNEP is consulting with the Swiss Government seeking financial support for a project on climate information dissemination within the framework of Earthwatch/GEMS. This is to be followed by a search for wider support from other donors.

10. Second World CLimate Conference also identified an urgent need to create a Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) and requested that its development and implementation should be pursued with urgency by scientists, Governments and international organizations. UNEP is involved in both the WCP and the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme and recognizes the need for close co-ordination of both programmes. UNEP's support for research and monitoring through the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, particularly concerning terrestrial ecosystems, will assist in the drawing up of improved projections of regional climate impacts.

11. The Executive Director notes the expressions that urgency is called for in dealing with climate change and welcomes the call to nations to launch negotiations on a convention on climate change and related legal instruments without delay, with the aim of adopting such a convention in 1992. UNEP, in conjunction with WMO and in accordance with Governing Council decisions, gives priority to facilitating the negotiating process. It is necessary that there be full participation by developing countries in all relevant activities concerning climate change. These activities include the negotiations on a convention on climate, the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other relevant research and assessment programmes.

2. The implications of the ministerial Declaration

12. The special circumstances of developing countries were particularly recognized by the ministers who adopted the Declaration on 7 November 1990. The Ministers recommended that adequate and additional financial resources should be mobilized and the best available environmentally sound technology should be transferred expeditiously, on a fair and most favourable basis.

13. UNEP will assist Governments in programmes to estimate the costs of complying with emission control measures and to identify the technological needs on a country by country basis. The roles of the proposed World Bank/UNEP/UNDP Global Environmental Facility, of a clearing-house mechanism and of a possible new international fund comprising adequate additional and timely financial resources and institutional arrangements for developing countries were recognized as essential by the ministers.

14. The Ministerial Declaration called for the preservation of world resources - notably the sustainable exploitation of forests. UNEP's programmes have a responsibility to develop activities encompassing a common approach for reducing the consumption of natural resources that preserve the global atmospheric environment.

B. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

15. The Governing Council in its decision SS.II/3, section B requested the Executive Director to arrange, jointly with the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, for the continuation of the IPCC and to report regularly to the Governing Council on the progress of the work of IPCC.

16. The activities of IPCC were geared towards the timely publication of the IPCC First Assessment Report for the Second World Climate Conference and the forty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, in order to pave the way for a start to the negotiations on a framework convention on climate change. In this connection, a third session of IPCC was convened in Washington D.C. with the main objectives of (a) assessing the progress made by the three Working Groups and the Special Committee on the Participation of Developing Countries; (b) reviewing the preparations of UNEP and WMO for negotiations on a framework convention on climate change, and (c) receiving a report on the preparations for the Second World Climate Conference.

17. At its second session in Washington D.C. (8-9 February 1990) the expanded Bureau of the IPCC decided on the structure of the IPCC First Assessment Report.

18. After a series of international workshops to draft and review the eleven sections that constitute the report of Working Group I (scientific aspects of climate change), the Group convened a meeting of lead authors in Edinburgh (United Kingdom) from 26 February to 3 March 1990.

19. The Chairman of the Working Group II (Environmental and Socio-economic Impacts resulting from climate change) convened two main meetings. A meeting of the co-chairmen of the seven subgroups was organized in Nalchik (USSR) from 24 February to 2 March 1990. The report of the Group, including the policymakers' summary, was adopted by a plenary session convened in Moscow from 28 to 31 May 1990.

20. The Response Strategies Working Group (Working Group III) organized a series of seminars for its main subgroups. The Group met in plenary in Geneva from 5 to 8 June 1990 to adopt its report.

21. The Special Committee on the Participation of Developing Countries met in plenary in Washington D.C. on 9 February 1990 to review its work and agree on the content of its final report. The session was followed by a meeting of the Drafting Group, held in Paris from 5 to 6 April 1990. To assist developing countries in preparing for some of the main IPCC meetings, the Special Committee organized two open-ended meetings: one in Geneva (31 May to 1 June 1990) prior to the plenary session of the Response Strategies Working Group, and another in Sundsvall from 24 to 25 August 1990, prior to the fourth plenary session of IPCC. The open-ended session in Sundsvall approved the report of the Special Committee.

22. The fourth plenary session of IPCC was convened in Sundsvall, Sweden from 27 to 31 August 1990. The session adopted the overview to the IPCC First Assessment Report and endorsed the decison of the Bureau as to the structure and content of the IPCC First Assessment Report.

23. The policymakers' summaries of the IPCC report have been published and circulated accordingly. They constituted a major input into the deliberations of the Second World Climate Conference, as well as major bedrock upon which the negotiations for a climate convention will be based.

24. Accordingly, UNEP, with the support of WMO, should intensify its commitment to the IPCC process to ensure a timely assessment of the state of the world's climate in support of the negotiation process to elaborate a climate convention.

25. UNEP, with the support of WMO, should assist Governments in undertaking negotiations on a convention by:

(a) providing some secretariat support to the negotiating process through providing a P4/P5 lawyer and a secretary (support staff);

(b) providing technical support to the negotiation process as requested.

26. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change met for its fifth plenary session in Geneva from 13-15 March 1991 and considered in detail its work programme for 1991 and beyond. The Panel established new working procedures and adopted its budget for the period 1991-1992. It set up task forces to address the following key issues:

- How to asssess national net greenhouse gases emissions;
- Prediction of the regional distribution of climate change and associated impact studies, including model valuation studies;
- Energy-related issues;
- Forestry-related issues;
- Vulnerability to sea-level rise;
- Emissions scenarios

27. At the meeting, it was also agreed that the work of IPCC should take into consideration work already being done by WMO and UNEP. Specifically, it was agreed that the assessment of the impacts on sea-level rise should draw on the work done by UNEP's GEMS/Atmosphere and the Regional Seas Programme of the Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre.

C. Framework convention on climate change

28. A meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Government Representatives to Prepare for Negotiations on a Framework Convention on Climate Change was held in Geneva from 24-26 September 1990. It concentrated on organizational aspects of the negotiation process, and set up a negotiating committee, for which the first meeting was scheduled for Washington D.C. from 4-14 February 1991.

29. At the Washington (February 4-14 1991) meeting, the Negotiating Committee established two working groups to assist it in negotiating an international instrument to reduce global climate warming. Working Group I will deal with appropriate commitments for reducing greenhouse gas emissions; additional financial resources to enable developing countries to fulfil their obligations under the convention; technology transfer; and the special needs of developing countries. Working Group II will consider the legal and institutional mechanisms of preparing the framework convention.

30. The Negotiating Committee adopted guidelines for the negotiations on a framework convention, and for the organization of the Working Groups, and procedural points on the holding of meetings and on the drafting to be done. It was emphasized in the guidelines that all aspects of the negotiations should be dealt with in an integrated manner; that the work of the Groups must be interrelated and must be integrated by the plenary session; and that funding commitments, mechanisms, technology transfer and international scientific and technological co-operation should be integral elements in the negotiations. The Committee also adopted a decision urging contributions to a special voluntary fund set up by the General Assembly to support the participation of developing countries in the negotiating process. Some contributions have already been received.

31. Regarding relations with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Committee concluded that the relationship had already been set out in General Assembly resolution 45/212 of 21 December 1990. The Committee said the IPCC was not a negotiating forum and that in continuing its work, as mandated by UNEP and WMO; the Panel could provide technical and scientific assistance in response to the requests of the Committee. Three other sessions of the Committee are to be held before January 1992.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to consider the following matters arising from the recommendations of the Second World Climate Conference and from General Assembly resolution 45/212 on Climate Change, requiring possible action by UNEP within available resources:

- Improving co-operation between UNEP and other United Nations agencies in the area of climate impact assessment and the studies needed to develop the proper response strategies particularly cost studies, and the implementation of relevant joint activities within the World Climate Programme;

- Supporting research efforts to anticipate and respond to adverse impacts of climate change at the global and regional levels;

- Strengthening public information programmes on the role of climate in development and on the additional risks posed by climate variability and change through a project with Switzerland and other donors within the framework of Earthwatch/GEMS;

- Carrying out expert consultations on the overall cost of dealing with climate change and assisting Governments in country-specific studies to estimate the costs of complying with emission control measures and identifying the available technology and technology needs on a country by country basis;

- Supporting the creation of Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) and assisting in ensuring, as a matter of urgency, that its development and implementation is pursued with urgency by scientists, Governments and international organizations.

- Supporting a secretariat established by the United Nations General Assembly to service the negotiations on a climate change convention by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee through the secondment to the Secretariat of a P4/P5 lawyer from UNEP and an appropriate support staff member.

II. PROGRESS IN THE PREPARATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL LEGAL INSTRUMENT ON THE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF THE PLANET

32. By its decision 14/26, the Governing Council recognized "the need for adequate protection and preservation of biological diversity" and requested the Executive Director "to establish an ad hoc working group of experts to investigate ..... the desirability and possible form of an umbrella convention to rationalize current activities in this field and to address other areas which might fall under such a convention".

33. At its fifteenth session, in its decision 15/34, the Council authorized the Executive Director "on the basis of the final report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts, to convene, in consultation with Governments and within available resources, an ad hoc working group of legal and technical experts with a mandate to negotiate an international legal instrument for the conservation of the biological diversity of the planet".

34. As a result of these decisions, three sessions of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on Biological Diversity took place in 1988-1990 and the first session of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Biological Diversity was held in Nairobi from 19-23 November 1990. The meeting was attended by 71 countries, the majority developing countries, and 14 international organizations. It was preceded by an expert meeting of a Sub-working Group on Biotechnology (14-17 November 1990) to discuss issues relevant to biotechnology transfer and to advise on biotechnology elements for possible inclusion in the convention.

35. At its first session, the Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts reviewed the reports of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on Biological Diversity and the report of the Sub-working Group on Biotechnology, as well as elements recommended by these latter two Groups for inclusion in the convention. The Group requested the Executive Director of UNEP to prepare a draft convention on biological diversity for consideration at its second session, planned for February 1991, where the negotiating phase proper would begin. There was general agreement that the draft convention should be ready for signing by 1992 (the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on the work of its first session is contained in document UNEP/Bio.Div/WG.2/1/4).

36. The second session of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts, which was held in Nairobi from 25 February to 6 March 1991, revised and adopted its Rules of Procedure, elected its Bureau and decided that work should be organized by establishing two sub-working groups (The report on the work of this second session is available as document UNEP/Bio.Div/WG.2/2/5). Sub-working Group I would deal with general issues such as the fundamental principles, general obligations, measures of in situ and ex situ conservation, and the relationship

with other legal instruments, as well as the financial aspects of such measures, and, in particular, in the convention Chapters I, Objectives; III, Fundamental principles; IV, General obligations; V, Measures; and XI, Institutional measures at the national level.

37. Sub-working Group II would consider issues of access to biodiversity and related technologies, including biotechnology, technology transfer, technical assistance, financial mechanisms and international co-operation, and, in particular, Chapters VI, Availability and access; VII, Transfer of technology; VIII, Technical assistance and IX, Financial Mechanisms.

38. Additionally, several delegations proposed to give the Ad Hoc Working Group a new, more adequate title, which would clearly reflect its mandate to negotiate a convention on biological diversity at the intergovernmental level. This proposal found general support from other delegations. There was clear understanding that renaming the Ad Hoc Working Group would not mean creation of a new group, nor affect the continuity of the process of elaboration of a convention on biological diversity.

39. Several proposals were made as to a new title for the Group. The proposal to use the title "Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee" as the first part of a new title won the general support of the delegations. It was decided to recommend that the matter of renaming the Group be addressed to the Governing Council at its sixteenth session, the body with appropriate authority to make relevant decisions.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

Take note of the report of the Executive Director on progress in the preparation of an international legal instrument on the biological diversity of the planet;

Decide to rename the Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Biological Diversity the "Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Convention for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity";

Decide that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee should be open to all States Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, with the participation of observers in accordance with the rules of procedure adopted by the Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts at its second session.

Further decide that this renaming of the Ad Hoc Working Group does not mean a new negotiating body nor affect the continuity of the process of elaborating the convention, which started with the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts.

III. SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

40. As recommended by the Governing Council at its fifteenth session, the Executive Director conveyed decision 15/24 on sustainable agriculture to the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

41. A joint FAO/UNEP technical consultation was convened from 2-3 October 1989 at FAO Headquarters in Rome, to discuss the modalities for co-operation in the implementation of decision 15/24.

42. In preparation for the elaboration of a world strategy on sustainable agriculture and to formulate recommendations for practical action, the twenty-fifth FAO General Conference requested the convening of a conference on agriculture and environment, to be held in The Netherlands, from 15-19 April 1991, with support from the Government of The Netherlands and with joint co-operation between FAO and UNEP.

43. A preparatory meeting for the conference was held in Rome, from 8-12 October 1990. The documents presented at this meeting were reviewed by the internal UNEP task force on sustainable agriculture, and a consolidated UNEP input was delivered to FAO.

44. The outcome of the conference will also be made available to the Secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) for use in the preparation of a strategy on sustainable production systems, as recommended by the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee meeting of UNCED.

45. To make use of China's experience of ecological farming in the planned strategy on sustainable production systems, a UNEP expert mission was undertaken to ecological villages in China from 12-17 October 1989.

46. Further, to satisfy the agricultural research community's growing interest in the use of geographic information systems (GIS) in efforts to increase the productivity of sustainable agriculture, especially in low-income developing countries, a scientific workshop was held in Nairobi from 14-18 January 1991, sponsored by UNEP, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and the Rockefeller Foundation. The workshop was also attended by participants from nine CGIAR centres, the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, the International Council for Research in Agroforestry, WMO, FAO and 20 institutions outside the CGIAR system. UNEP's Global Resource Information Database (GRID) was identified as being a potential focus for co-ordination of both relevant data and GIS technology for the system.

47. At the workshop it was agreed that work commence to develop, in an effective and timely manner, intelligent geographic information systems which would ultimately be used by decision makers to plan in a better way the use of scarce financial and environmental resources in the progression towards improved, sustainable and environmentally sound agricultural practices.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to note the report of the Executive Director on the implementation of Governing Council decision 15/24 on sustainable agriculture.